

CITY OF MESA
HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HRAB)
December 4, 2013 MINUTES

The Human Relations Advisory Board (HRAB) of the City of Mesa met on December 4th, 2013,
at 6:00pm in the Upper Level, City Council Chambers, 57 E. First Street.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Denise Heap, Chair
Susan Lotz, Vice Chair
Frank Johnson
Tony Liuzzo
Cliff Moon
Talmage Pearce
Lu Ann Schmidt
Mark Tompert

MEMBERS ABSENT

Cheryl Anderson

STAFF PRESENT

Andrea Arenas
Tony Filler
Ruth Giese
Justin Smothers
Ray Villa
John Wesley

GUESTS

Terry Benelli
Lam Q. Bui
Van Bui
Dzung C-Tran
Kevin Dang
Kathy Huynh
Son Huynh
Bill Laurie
Mai Le
Kevin Ngo
Eileen Nguyen
Nam Nguyen
Sang Nguyen
Tao Nguyen
Yen Nguyen

1. Chair's Call to Order.

Ms. Heap called the meeting to order at 5:55pm.

- Introduction and announcement of new board members Cheryl Anderson and Tony Liuzzo.

Ms. Heap advised of the new board members and welcomed Mr. Liuzzo to his first meeting.

2. Items from Citizens Present.*

Ms. Benelli requested to speak to the board expressing support for the police advisory board meetings, especially the Red Mountain Community Advisory Board which has been inactive for the past two years. Ms. Benelli stated that the meetings were a great way for the public to communicate with the police department and address safety concerns.

3. Approval of minutes from the October 23rd, 2013 meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. Schmidt to approve the October 23rd, 2013 minutes, Mr. Tompert seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Discuss and take action on Mesa Police Department Report.

- Report from Commander Tony Filler from the Red Mountain Police District.

Cmdr. Filler commented on the citizen concern from Ms. Benelli. Cmdr. Filler noted that the Red Mountain Community Advisory Board has been in remission since he became Commander eighteen months ago due to low attendance and greater accessibility of information (such as police stats online). Cmdr. Filler stated that he plans to speak with the Councilmembers after the holiday break to review Red Mountain's demographics and stats. Cmdr. Filler would like to encourage community engagement and agrees that more citizen interaction is necessary. Ms. Heap commented that she too is aware of

incidents that required more personalized attention. In response, Cmdr. Filler explained that he cannot respond to generalities but rather the specific cases, and suggested to Ms. Heap to have those individuals speak with him directly.

Cmdr. Filler stated that since June 2012, when he took over, the department has decreased crime in many of the areas. Cmdr. Filler has had ownership of the division for over four years as Lieutenant in several areas. Cmdr. Filler stated that they identified the core problem area to be University to 8th Ave/ Horne to Gilbert, also known as the "Four Corners". Cmdr. Filler explained that his solution to the higher concentration of activity is to deploy more staff. Ms. Heap questioned if there is a specific area within the Four Corners that is more problematic. Cmdr. Filler responded that they treat the area as a whole.

Cmdr. Filler stated that he is also the Program Manager for the officer camera system. Tazer International makes a camera that goes on the officer's eyeglasses. They began a yearlong 50-camera pilot program with a comprehensive study done by Arizona State University. The Chief of Police presented an expanded program to the Public Safety Committee where they would receive 100 more cameras over the next three years for a total of 350 cameras. After reviewing the final evaluation, it was noted that complaints with citizens have decreased by 60% and use of force complaint are down 75% when officers wear the cameras. The cameras are also beneficial because they show the officer's view it its entirety. With the popularity of phone cameras it is common for people to capture snippets of incidents or use what is to their advantage, but the with officer camera the entire event is captured and submitted for evidence. The cameras show transparency within the department which is what both the citizens and the city wants. Mr. Moon thanked the department for their hard work, and commented on the resource officers that go above and beyond in the schools.

- Report on police related incidents and activities.

Mr. Villa did not have any updated incident report for this meeting. Mr. Villa announced that Cmdr. Shelley, who oversees the Center Against Family Violence, is working with Mesa Community College by giving presentation on sex trafficking. Mr. Villa stated that he can request Cmdr. Shelley to come to the next board meeting to give the same presentation.

- Updates and scheduling of upcoming Police Advisory Board meetings.

The Human Rights Advisory Board will be meeting on December 10th, 2013 at 6pm at the Central Police Station community room. The Human Rights Advisory Board is made up of members of the police department and members of the community to discuss LGBTQ issues. The Asian Community Advisory Board will also be meeting on December 10th, 2013 at 5:30pm at Dobson Pediatrics Center, and the Senior Advisory Board is scheduled to meet on December 16th, 2013 at 9:30am at the Red Mountain Multigenerational Center.

5. Hear a presentation, discuss and consider update on the General Plan.

Mr. Wesley, Planning Director for the City of Mesa, provided an update on the General Plan. Mr. Wesley advised that the first draft is currently available on the city's webpage. Mr. Wesley explained that Arizona State Statues require an updated General Plan every ten years to help guide the development of communities. Within the next thirty years Mesa anticipates an additional 170k residents. Considerations must be made for what Mesa can do to create a more recognizable, self-sufficient city that attracts employment and provides a high quality living environment. Mr. Wesley stated that they have identified some underlying issues: high quality development, changing demographics, public health, urban design and place-making and responding to a desert environment. There are also three identified guiding principles for the General Plan: create and maintain a variety of great neighborhoods, grow and maintain stable and diverse jobs, and provide rich public spaces and cultural resources. The General Plan will be broken down into four sections: Introduction, Transforming the City- creating a sense of place, Supporting Infrastructure, and Administration/ Implementation.

Neighborhoods are an important part of the community and Mesa would like neighborhoods that maintain value over time. Mr. Wesley noted that over 70k dwelling units are expected to be added. Description of key elements needed for strong neighborhoods are: safe, clean, healthy living environments, build community and foster social interaction, connectivity and walkability, provide for diversity, neighborhood character and personality, and quality design and development. Mesa plans to create and maintain a variety of great neighborhoods by encouraging the appropriate mix of uses that will bring life and energy to neighborhoods while protecting them from encroachment by incompatible development, reviewing new development for the mix of uses and form of development needed to establish lasting neighborhoods, and enhancing the neighborhood outreach program to improve development of neighborhood leaders, educate neighborhood residents regarding property maintenance responsibilities, and provide a better forum for citizen engagement and communication.

Mr. Moon questioned what strategies are used to promote diversity among the changing demographics such as reaching out to various cultural and religious groups as developers build areas. Mr. Wesley agreed that this is a valid concern, but property rights provide limitations on what the city can require. Mr. Wesley stated that the city can make suggestions, but that does not guarantee that home builders will follow given that they have a work objective. Mr. Moon suggested that something as simple as featuring diversity on advertisements would send a message to the public that a variety of people are welcome. Mr. Wesley stated the developer rarely seeks advice or consultation on media campaigns, but in the instances that they do the city will suggest such. Ms. Heap asked if the developer could be required to sign a statement stating that they will adhere to all housing and ADA requirements. In response, Mr. Wesley stated that they could look into an additional statement given that the builders are required to adhere to the regulations already. Ms. Schmidt commented on her positive experience with homebuilders complying with the needs of her disability as she prepares to settle in new construction in east Mesa.

Another important element of community growth is stable and diverse jobs. Mesa's workforce is expected to increase by around 130k jobs. Some of key elements in promoting employment will be: H.E.A.T.T. Initiative (healthcare, education, aerospace, tourism and technology), skilled and knowledgeable human capital, sense of place/quality employment centers, regional collaboration, infrastructure, and retail development and revitalization. In order to meet this goal, Mesa plans to preserve designated employment areas for future job growth, uphold a business service approach that facilitates the successful attraction, expansion, and retention of businesses in Mesa, and continue to develop the educational resources available in Mesa and work with education providers and industry leaders in an effort to provide skilled workers for Mesa businesses and to assist students in moving from the classroom to the workforce. Ms. Lotz questioned what kind of jobs they hope to attract. Mr. Wesley stated that previously they identified characteristics of employers but have learned that that put limitations on potential candidates.

Mr. Wesley advised that there will also be a need for quality amenities to attract and retain jobs and residents. This will be done by creating quality public spaces that are: accessible and connected, active, appropriately scaled and integrated, inviting and comfortable, safe, and unique in character. Key features for cultural resources will be: variety, accessibility, active participation and a sense of ownership, nurturing and stimulating curiosity, regional scale and local scale, preserving the past and creating a future identity, and supporting and encouraging artists. In order to provide rich, high quality public spaces and cultural amenities, Mesa will consider the design and redesign of public buildings and facilities will include consideration of how to provide rich public spaces where appropriate, design of neighborhoods, neighborhood village centers, mixed use activity districts, downtown, and transit districts should consider and include the development of a variety of public gathering places appropriate for the scale and location of the development, and co-locate community facilities such as libraries, parks, fire stations, museums, etc. where feasible to increase the opportunities for social interaction and reduced costs.

The final section discussed, as required by the State Statute, is land use. Land use is depicted on a Character Map which includes the key areas: Neighborhoods (such as large lot/rural, traditional, suburban, manufactured homes), Neighborhood Village Centers, Downtown, Mixed Use Activity Districts (such as community-scale and regional-scale), Mixed Use Community, Employment Districts (such as business parks, industrial and employment core), Specialty Districts (such as education campuses, medical campuses and airports), Transit Districts (station areas and corridors), and Parks and Open Spaces. In areas with a Neighborhood character development will be reviewed for the impact on improving or maintaining the existing neighborhood and achieving the development and design standards for neighborhoods set forth in Chapter Four of the General Plan, and for compliance with any approved sub-area or neighborhood plan for the specific area.

In closing, Mr. Wesley provided the remaining timeline for the General Plan before adoption: second draft plan by January 2014, final draft plan by May 2014, Council action June/July 2014 and public vote November 2014. Mr. Liuzzo questioned what kind of processes will be in place to make sure the plan is being followed. In response, Mr. Wesley stated that Chapter Sixteen of the plan outlines the monitoring plan. In addition to updating the plan every decade, the State Statute also mandates an annual update to Council in order to ensure that it is being followed and obtain feedback. In the event that something needs to be changed or updated, there is a policy outlined on how to do so. Ms. Heap made a final comment, in order to have integrated neighborhoods she suggested that school grounds should be open to the public, and Mesa must value all demographics of residents. Mr. Wesley noted her comments and thanked the board for their feedback.

6. Hear a presentation and discuss the request to proclaim the South Vietnamese Flag as the official flag of Mesa's Vietnamese community from the Vietnamese Community of Arizona.

Mr. Dang, President of the Vietnamese Community of Arizona, introduced himself and fellow community members who were present to speak on behalf of their organization's request for the City of Mesa to proclaim the South Vietnamese Flag as the official flag of their community. Mr. Dang explained that there are approximately 30k Vietnamese-American residing in the Phoenix Metropolitan area. The South Vietnamese flag, also known as the Heritage & Freedom Flag of Vietnam, was the national flag of the Republic of Vietnam from 1955 to April 30, 1975 (the fall of Saigon). The flag signifies Vietnamese pride, endurance, indomitable spirit and imposing victories against Chinese invaders. The flag is an emblem of a democratic Vietnam, representing freedom, human rights, peace, opportunity and their ancestry. Currently, there are 9 states, 3 counties and 77 cities, including Chandler, AZ, that have adopted resolutions recognizing the flag, and they would like Mesa to do the same.

Ms. Le, current TNT Arizona Radio Station Director, Vietlifestyle Magazine Chief Editor and newest member of the Mesa Police Asian Advisory Board, continued the presentation. Ms. Le explained that there are currently several thousand Vietnamese Americans living in Mesa given its large diversity and positive cultural contributions such as Mekong Plaza, the largest indoor Asian mall in AZ (of which over 70% of the business owners are Vietnamese). Ms. Le further communicated that many of their cultural events occur each year in Mesa such as the Moon Festival at Mekong Plaza and Asian Festival at the Mesa Arts Center, both drawing over 5k attendees. On February 8, 2014 they will be holding the Vietnamese Lunar New Year and Miss Vietnam Arizona at Dobson High School. Ms. Le advised that the United States flag will still be the official flag that represents all citizens of the United States of America, including those of Vietnamese American descent, but by recognizing the Heritage & Freedom flag as the official symbol of the Vietnamese community in Mesa the city is acknowledging its symbolism and honoring those who fought for independence and democracy in Vietnam.

Mr. L. Bui, a Vietnamese Veteran and immigrant, provided a personal account of his early life in Vietnam and recounted his time in the army. Mr. Bui's stated that the flag symbolizes freedom to him and he supports the request for Mesa to officially recognize the flag.

Ms. Y. Nguyen is the Interim Executive Director for Asian Pacific Community in Action, a non-profit agency that provides health services, advocacy and education to the Asian community in Maricopa County, as well a business owner in Mekong Plaza. Ms. Nguyen explained that her family has considered the U.S. their home for over twenty years and is proud of her brother who served in the U.S. Marines, but still likes to honor her Vietnamese heritage. Ms. Nguyen also supports the initiative for Mesa to proclaim the South Vietnamese flag as the official flag of their community as a way to respectfully recognize the Vietnamese community.

Mr. N. Nguyen is the President of the Vietnam Student Association at Arizona State University and the Vice President of External Affairs at the Vietnamese American Coalition of Arizona. Mr. Nguyen represents the youth perspective with increased interest in the Vietnamese culture. Mr. Nguyen stated that he want the flag preserved as a symbol of history and recognized meaning for future generations.

Mr. Laurie, a U.S. Vietnam Veteran and 30-year Mesa resident, expressed his support for recognition of the Vietnamese flag. Mr. Laurie stated that it is not only the Vietnamese community that would like to see the flag formally acknowledged during appropriate public events, but there are many native born Americans that also appreciate the symbolism of the flag. Mr. Laurie feels it will be a sign of disrespect if the request is not approved.

Mr. Dang concluded the presentation with a summary of the previous statements. Ms. Heap noted that the agenda item was written to allow the board to hear and discuss the request, but unable to take formal actions. Ms. Heap explained that this request can be moved for a sub-committee to research and review pending board member interest. Ms. Heap expressed that she was moved by the speakers and sympathizes with their request as she too is part of a culture that has a flag that should be recognized. Ms. Heap stated to the board for consideration that if they make the recommendation to recognize this flag, they must also be willing to do the same for other cultures and flags. Ms. Heap requested to hear from all members of the board.

Mr. Liuzzo commented that he would need more time for consideration in order to give the request the attention it deserves. Mr. Pearce expressed similar views. Mr. Pearce respects and appreciated the presenters' favorable views on democracy and the United States, but feel that more information is required from Mesa's legal counsel. Ms. Lotz concurred with the prior two statements, adding that they would need to be aware of any political harm prior to making a decision.

Mr. Johnson stated that he understands the desire to preserve and recognize the struggles of one's heritage being that he feels the same way. Mr. Johnson acknowledged that discrimination still exists, it is a prevalent issue in his own life, and he supports the request for the City of Mesa to recognize the South Vietnamese flag as the official flag of their community. Mr. Moon recalled the harassment on the Latino community who were proudly waving both the American and Mexican flag several years ago during political debate. Mr. Moon stated that he saw them as individuals proclaiming to be Americans who are proud of their ethnic heritage. Mr. Moon said that he views the request from the Vietnamese community in the same light. Mr. Moon explained that he does not have enough knowledge on the constitutionality of the request and will need further information to state his vote.

Mr. Tompert reiterated that the board could only make a motion to recommend the request for Mesa's City Council to consider, and they in fact would not be the ones determining the outcome. That being said, Mr. Tompert expressed his support of the request and would be willing to make a motion at the appropriate time. Ms. Schmidt positively commented on the presentation of the request. Ms. Schmidt stated that she is also currently in support of the request, but also feels that more information is needed in order for the board to make a determination.

Mr. Dang thanked the board members for their comments and clarified some of the misconceptions. Mr. Dang stated that approving this request does not mean they expect the City of Mesa to hang the flag in public locations. The intention of the request is to allow the Vietnamese community to display their flag at appropriate cultural events, such as those stated by Ms. Le, and make it illegal for someone to take it down during such an event. Ms. Heap questioned if they have ever been told they could not display the flag, or forced to remove it. In response, Mr. Dang stated that they have never been told such, but during a Vietnamese event in Phoenix the flag was forcefully taken down. Since they are making Mesa the new hub for Vietnamese cultural events, the community would like the support from the city to publically display their flag.

Ms. Heap thoughtfully stated that the community already has legal right, under the First Constitutional Amendment: Freedom of Speech, to display their flag. Mr. Liuzzo also commented that they further they discuss the issues, the more legal concerns he has for a city to make such a declaration even though he personally agrees with their intentions for the request. Mr. Liuzzo, Mr. Tompert and Ms. Heap agreed to staff a special committee meeting in order to review the request with Mesa's legal counsel. Staff agreed to contact the appropriate legal representatives for the City of Mesa and notify of pending meeting.

7. Hear, discuss, and take action on items presented by the Ad Hoc Issues Research and Action Team.

- Provide update on the collaboration with Morrison Institute on the community survey.

Mr. Moon advised that a representative from Morrison Institute will be attending the next IRA meeting on December 19th, 2013 to present a draft copy of the survey.

- Report on the Mesa Speaks, Mesa Listens: Community Conversation on Discrimination series.

Mr. Moon announced that IRA determined a list of short term and long term goals for the series. A motion was also passed for staff to begin scheduling the locations, date and times of the conversations.

- Report on the speaker's bureau.

Mr. Moon stated that he compiled verbiage and examples of the type of information that could be available on the city's webpage, staff will review and work with appropriate departments for best course of action.

- Participation in Phoenix Pride Parade to be held on April 5th, 2014.

A motion was moved by the IRA committee to participate in the Phoenix Pride Parade. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion, the motion moved unanimously.

8. Hear, discuss, and take action on items presented by the Ad Hoc Disabilities Action Team.

- Update on education event for service animals.

Mr. Tompert disclosed that DAT decided to do an awareness campaign educating the public on different kinds of services animals, rules/ regulations, rights of the service animal owner, etc. The material is planned to be presented in the form of a flyer which will be distributed to businesses and available online.

- Report on ways of educating the community on mental health issues.

A presentation will be made at the next board meeting by court administrators to discuss new protocol for diverting defendants with mental health issues, veteran and the homeless

9. Hear, discuss, and take action on items presented by the Ad Hoc Youth Diversity Education Team.

- Report on educating youth through the Cinema Series project.

Ms. Lotz informed the board that YDE will begin a pilot program at Dobson High School where they will implement the Cinema Series as an educational forum. The committee is still in the planning phase.

- Report on educating youth through the bullying project.

Ms. Lotz stated that YDE is continuing to look at ways of educating youth about bullying. Ms. Lotz advised that they are considering a blog format.

- Report on discussion of the M.E.S.A. project.

Ms. Lotz stated that they support and will continue looking in Mesa Police Department's M.E.S.A. project.

10. Hear, discuss, and take action on items presented by the Ad Hoc Veterans Task Force.

- Introduction of new staff liaison, Justin Smothers.

Ms. Giese introduced Mr. Smothers, an AmeriCorps VISTA member, who will be working as a staff liaison for VTF.

- Meeting scheduled for December 12th, 2013 at 11:30am at Mesa City Plaza, Ste. 250.

Ms. Giese reminded the board members of the scheduled meeting.

11. Hear and discuss conferences and/or meetings.

- MLK Dinner to be held on January 18th, 2014 at Marriott Hotel & Resorts 200 N. Centennial Way, Mesa at 6pm.
- MLK Parade to be held on January 20th, 2014 in Downtown Mesa from 11am-12pm.
- Regional HRC Meeting scheduled on February 11th, 2014 in the evening at City of Tempe's Transportation Bldg.

Ms. Heap advised the board members of the events listed above. Staff will be contacting the board to provide further information. All of the events are a great way for the board to get out into the community and network with other HRC affiliates.

12. Scheduling of meetings, future agenda items, and general information.

- Next meeting will be held on January 22nd, 2014 at 6pm.

13. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:02pm.

Submitted By:



Ruth Giese,
Diversity Program Administrator